

Somerville Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change
Meeting Minutes
January 9, 2024, 7:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Attending: Larry Yu (Chair), Ramón Bueno (Vice chair), Eri Furusawa, Eliza Johnston, Courtney Koslow, Julie Wood, Alexis Washburn (Acting Commissioner), Christine Blais (ex-officio)

Commissioners Not Attending: Eliza Johnston

Attendees: Edward Woll, Grace Hall, John Scherbarth, Karry Muzzey, Matthew Goldstein, Ron Cavallo, Terry Altherr, William Valletta, Stephen Mackey

Meeting started at: 7:03 pm.

Introductions

CEUCC members, then members of the public, introduced themselves. Introductions ended at 7:12pm.

CEUCC members congratulated OSE staff Emily Sullivan for receiving the American Planning Association - MA Chapter's Emerging/Rising Planner Award.

Subcommittee Updates:

- Outreach - Somerville Climate Forward
 - o Director Blais shared the latest on the planning process for SCF and noted the emphasis on workforce development being a strong throughline in the Plan.
 - o Members of the public and CEUCC members may share their feedback on the draft Plan via three possible methods:
 - *Reach out to OSE@Somervillema.gov to provide feedback via focus group*
 - *As comments to the plan draft in the google doc*
 - *By engaging with the Community Engagement Specialist, Naomi Gross, via 1-1.*
 - o OSE is currently conducting focus groups with youth leaders, activists, business leaders, and low-income residents. CEUCC is collecting feedback through January 31st.
 - o Director Blais called to form a new Subcommittee focused on providing feedback on the draft Strategies.
 - *Commissioners Koslow, Washburn (once confirmed), Furusawa, and Bueno (time allowing) volunteered.*
 - o Commissioner Yu mentioned the possibility of this Subcommittee supporting Emily to parse through the public comments received to the draft.
 - Subgroup to work amongst themselves and report feedback to Emily
 - *Must meet after Commissioner Washburn is confirmed to stay within state law*
 - o Next Steps:
 - *CEUCC members to submit comments on the SCF draft by January 31st.*
 - *Members of the SCF Subcommittee to support OSE's review of public feedback.*
- Administration
 - o Commissioner Yu invited CEUCC to inform modernizing the enabling ordinance of CEUCC and potentially inform the creation of bylaws. *As a first step, the CEUCC would align on a set of updated mission and duties for the Commission, how we might work together, and what rules of governance, if any, should change.*

- Director Blais shared [Jamboard](#) to source recommendations from Commissioners for amending the ordinance establishing the CEUCC.
- Major points of general consensus include:
 - Redefining the function of the Commission to 1) explicitly encompass both community-facing impact and informing municipal government operations, 2) serve as a centralizing force rather than being a purely advisory body to the Mayor and OSZ, and 3) have an explicit focus on equity and justice.
 - Increasing the number of seats on the Commission to 12-16 members.
 - Diversifying membership in both geography and expertise, including adding youth members and ensuring the Commission has at least one renter.
 - Changing the name of the Commission to reflect climate resilience and other environmental goals of the City.
 - Shifting notes duty away from Commissioners and toward an automated approach or toward having OSE take notes.
- Members of the public recommended 1) adding representation from landlords and employers (who can speak to transportation-related items serving workers), and 2) increasing membership but shifting toward a subcommittee model that has the potential to increase engagement from individual Commissioners.
- Next steps:
 - *Commissioners Yu and Wood to iterate on a revised ordinance and reach out to members of the CEUCC 1-1 to discuss further.*
- GRIP Grant discussion
 - Director Blais requested the CEUCC to vote on a letter in support of a grant that would fund a study in Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville to pilot a solution to existing gaps in the electric system.
 - The pilots would address the additional capacity need for voltage in homes by deploying shared, underground transformers in the public right-of-way that residential buildings would be able to plug into.
 - **Commissioner Bueno made a MOTION endorsing the support letter at 8:34pm. Commissioner Koslow SECONDED at 8:34 pm. Motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY at 8:35 pm.**
- Fossil Fuel Free
 - Director Blais shared that OSE is working on social media outreach to build on the positive press around Somerville's candidacy.
 - Commissioner Washburn proposed inviting residents who have already gone fossil fuel free to share their stories.
 - *Naomi Gross will reach out to the Outreach Subcommittee for a video project.*
 - Commissioner Furusawa noted that with quorum increased, the Outreach Subcommittee has room for two more members to join Commissioner Johnston and Furusawa.
 - Next steps:
 - *CEUCC members to share out social media re: Fossil Fuel Free from OSE.*

- *CEUCC members who would like to join the Outreach Subcommittee to contact OSE or Commissioner Furusawa.*

Any and all business before the Commission.

- Commissioner Bueno noted the posting and outreach request for the new residential decarbonization program manager position at OSE.
- Crystal Huff, member of the public, requested that CEUCC help clarify the evolving rules around MassSave's incentives for energy upgrades. Director Blais invited Crystal to reach out directly to OSE.
 - Relatedly, Commissioner Washburn proposed clarifying the rules for people to get involved in CEUCC and making it easier for people to submit comments, rather than asking them to attend and wait until the relevant agenda item is up for discussion.

Review and approve meeting minutes.

- Meeting minutes approval will be pushed to the February meeting to allow for more time to circulate the draft notes among CEUCC members.

The next CEUCC meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 13, 2024.

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 pm.